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SUBJECT: AZERBAIJAN: 2009 INCSR PART 1 SUBMISSION

I. Summary

Azerbaijan is located along drug transit routes running from Afghanistan and Central Asia or Iran to Russia and Europe, and trans-shipments of illegal substances from East to West via its

territory remain Azerbaijan's primary narcotics issue. Domestic consumption and cultivation of narcotics as well as seizures have continued to increase. The United States has funded counternarcotics assistance to Azerbaijan through the FREEDOM Support Act since 2002. Azerbaijan is party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention.

II. Status of Country

Azerbaijan's main narcotics problem is the transit of drugs through its territory, but domestic consumption is growing. Azerbaijan emerged as a narcotics transit route in the 1990s because of the disruption of the "Balkan Route" during the wars among the countries of the former Yugoslavia. According to the Government of Azerbaijan (GOAJ), most of the narcotics transiting Azerbaijan originate in Afghanistan and follow any of four primary routes to Russia and Europe. Azerbaijan shares a 380 mile (611 km) frontier with Iran, and its security forces need additional material resources and training to combat increasingly sophisticated trafficking groups. Iranian and other traffickers are exploiting this situation. The most widely abused drugs in Azerbaijan are opiates - especially heroin-illicit medicines, cannabis, Ecstasy, hashish, cocaine and LSD.

Domestic consumption continues to grow. The GOAJ has registered 23,254 persons as drug addicts. Unofficial figures are estimated at approximately 300,000, the majority of which are heroin addicts. Students are thought to be a large share of total drug abusers at 30-35 percent. The majority of heroin users are concentrated in the region of Absheron, which includes the capital Baku, while the rest are primarily in the Lankaran District near Iran. Drug use and drug dealing among women has been rising, and illegal drug use among unemployed young men in rural areas is a chronic problem.

III. Country Actions Against Drugs in 2009

Policy Initiatives. The GOAJ continued to refine its strategy to combat drug transit and usage in Azerbaijan. The GOAJ bolstered its ability to collect and analyze drug-related intelligence, resulting in more productive investigations against narcotics traffickers. The GOAJ held the chairmanship of GUAM (Georgia-Ukraine-Azerbaijan-Moldova) from July 2007-July 2008 and had pushed for sharing counternarcotics information through the GUAM countries' Virtual Law Enforcement Center (VLEC) in Baku. The VLEC was established with USG assistance. The center provides an encrypted information system that allows member states' law-enforcement agencies to share information and coordinate their efforts against terrorism, narcotics trafficking, small arms, and trafficking in persons. In December 2008 members of GUAM signed a protocol that would increase the level of information shared through VSEC; however, the extent to which the information is shared appears to remain limited.

Azerbaijan is also party to the European Commission-funded South Caucasus Anti-Drug Program, which aims to reduce supply and demand

by improving governments' capacity to address these problems. The 2007-2009 program has promoted drug policies and legislation that are in harmony with EU standards, refurbished a rehabilitation and treatment center for the Ministry of Justice, sponsored an awareness campaign and training courses, gathered information about drug addicts in the penitentiary system, and improve coordination between EU and Azerbaijani law enforcement agencies.

**Law Enforcement Efforts.** During the first nine months of 2009, Azerbaijani law enforcement agencies confiscated approximately 900 kg of narcotics. This is 60% increase compared to the same period in 2008. Of this, the majority was seized while being smuggled across the border with Iran. During the year 1,956 drug traffickers were arrested. Of the 1,956 people who were arrested for drug-related crimes in Azerbaijan, 1843 were described as able bodied, unemployed people who were not in school, 392 had a previous criminal record, 65 were women and 4 were underage children.

In October 2009, the Central Department to Combating Law Violations in Customs seized 20 kg of heroin that was smuggled by an Azerbaijani/Iranian citizen through the southern border with Iran. This case is illustrative of numerous seizures that occurred throughout the year, in which large quantities of drugs were transported from Iran and through Azerbaijan by multinational criminal groups. The majority of drugs enter Azerbaijan via land routes from Iran, though some are transported by ships on the Caspian Sea.

**Corruption.** As a matter of government policy, Azerbaijan does not encourage or facilitate illicit production or distribution of narcotic or psychotropic drugs or other controlled substances, or the laundering of proceeds from illegal drug transactions. However, corruption remains a significant problem in Azerbaijan and permeates much of society. Azerbaijani judges, prosecutors and investigators attended DOJ-sponsored training courses on corruption investigation, prosecution techniques, investigating money laundering, and terrorism-financing. These broad-based skills may aid in the prosecution of drug-related cases and limit the scope of corruption.

In October 2008, several police officers from a Baku anti-drug trafficking unit were arrested on distribution charges. One kilogram of heroin was seized during the search of their offices.

**Agreements and Treaties.** Azerbaijan is party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention, the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances, and the 1961 UN Single Convention as amended by its 1972 Protocol. Azerbaijan also is a party to the UN Convention against Corruption, and to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols against trafficking in persons, migrant smuggling and illegal manufacturing and trafficking in firearms.

**Cultivation and Production.** Azerbaijan's problem with narcotics largely stems from its role as a transit state, rather than as a significant drug cultivation site. Cannabis and poppy are cultivated illegally, mostly in southern Azerbaijan, but only to a modest extent. During the year 448 tons of illegally cultivated and wild narcotic producing plants were destroyed.

**Drug Flow/Transit.** Afghan opiates transit to Azerbaijan by three primary routes: from Central Asia and across the Caspian Sea, or from Iran through the south of the country or through uncontrolled regions surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh, which remains in conflict. The Iranian route accounts for 95 percent of this flow, with commercial trucks and horses serving as the mode of transportation across the border. Drugs are then smuggled through Azerbaijan to Russia, and finally on to Central and Western Europe. Efforts by Turkey to increase enforcement along its border with Iran may have contributed to increased transit through Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan cooperates with Black Sea and Caspian Sea littoral states in tracking and interdicting narcotics shipments, especially morphine base and heroin. Caspian Sea cooperation includes efforts to interdict narcotics transported across the Caspian Sea by ferry. In 2008, Azerbaijan created 50 new border guard outposts and coast guard bases and a canine training center. Smugglers are increasingly trafficking by air, during the year the number of seizures at airports increased. Additionally the Government of Azerbaijan is currently in the process of ratifying a new customs code which has not been modernized since Soviet times which should assist in eradicating the drug transit issue. In April 2008, the Ministry of Internal Affairs signed an agreement with the Russian Federal Drug Control Service that facilitates joint operations, cooperative training and the sharing of interdiction techniques. This joint operation has lead to the seizure of approximately 200 kg of narcotics.

**Domestic Programs.** In 2009, the GOAJ discontinued its

anti-narcotics public service announcement program that used kiosks and billboards downtown Baku. In its place, the GOAJ has created a new antidrug campaign that primarily focused on students. Lesson plans and homework have been created for primary school children. On university campuses the GOAJ funded NGOs to receive training on narcotics, create on campus antidrug advertisements, and have drug specialists meet with students. Azerbaijan is also focusing anti-narcotic campaigns on prison inmates. Information is being disseminated to inmates about narcotics, and a database of prisoners that abuse narcotics is being created. Journalists also received guidelines on how to write reports that deal with narcotics.

#### IV. U.S. Policy Initiatives and Programs

Bilateral Cooperation. In 2009, the U.S. Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS) office continued to assist the Azerbaijan State Border Service (SBS) and the State Customs Committee (SCC) and other GOAJ agencies involved in export control and related border security. EXBS training and assistance efforts, while aimed at the nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, directly enhanced Azerbaijan's ability to control its borders and to interdict contraband, including narcotics. During the year, EXBS sponsored border control and management courses for SBS and SCC officers. The focus of these courses was advanced cargo inspection methods and border control tactics for ports of entry, or green borders. Others efforts were aimed at improving the Border Guard's control of Azerbaijan's southern green border. The U.S. donation of search tools and related equipment, such as all terrain vehicles, and watchtower construction materials significantly enhanced the Border Guards' ability to hamper illegal penetrations of Azerbaijan's southern border. The donation of x-ray metal analyzers and x-ray machines improved State Customs Committee Contraband Teams' detection capabilities. Several SCC officers were trained on the use of VACIS x-ray machines for scanning vehicles at the main ports of entry into Azerbaijan.

During the year EXBS continued negotiations for U.S. technical assistance for a National Targeting Center being constructed as SCC HQ in Baku, and in July officials from the State Customs Committee visited the US national targeting centers. Additionally, the EXBS program continued increasing AJ Coast Guard capabilities with vessel and land-based radar systems, long term training of AJCG officers at US Coast Guard facilities in the US, and mobile USCG training teams to Azerbaijan. During 2006, DTRA and EXBS helped equip a maritime base near Azerbaijan's southern border in Astara. The base now hosts two patrol boats and two fast response boats, and is also used for extended